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TO RUEHZO/AFRICAN UNION COLLECTIVE IMMEDIATE
RUEHDS/AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA IMMEDIATE 2054
RUEHAE/AMEMBASSY ASMARA IMMEDIATE 1762
RUEHJB/AMEMBASSY BUJUMBURA IMMEDIATE 0787
RUEHDJ/AMEMBASSY DJIBOUTI IMMEDIATE 0001
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SUBJECT: (U) AMBASSADOR RICE'S MEETING WITH ETHIOPIAN PRIME
MINISTER MELES ZENAWI ON SEPTEMBER 21, 2009

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¶1. Classified by Ambassador Susan Rice. Reason: 1.4 (b) and (d)

¶2. (U) September 21, 2009; 2:30 p.m.; New York, NY.

¶3. (U) Participants:

U.S.
Ambassador Susan Rice
Assistant Secretary Johnnie Carson

Ethiopia
Prime Minister Meles Zenawi
Charge d, Affairs Negash Kebret Bortora

¶4. (C) SUMMARY. USUN Ambassador Susan Rice and African Affairs Assistant Secretary (A/S) Johnnie Carson met with Ethiopian Prime Minister Meles Zenawi on September 21 on the margins of the UN General Assembly (UNGA). In an amicable discussion, Meles offered his thoughts on how Somalia,s Transitional Federal Government (TFG) can move forward and opined that the Government of Kenya,s (GOK) efforts to support a takeover of the southern Somalia port city of Kismayo from U.S.-designated Foreign Terrorist Organization (FTO) al-Shabaab will fail. While noting that he values Ethiopia,s relationship with the Obama Administration and would like to continue its dialogue with Washington, Meles did not fully agree with the priorities laid-out by Ambassador Rice and A/S Carson concerning free and fair national elections, political space for the opposition, and an open economy. Meles said he doubted that Ethiopia,s border dispute with neighboring Eritrea would be resolved so long as Eritrean President Issais remains in power, and supported the idea of a new UN Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) sanctioning Eritrea for its illegal activities in Somalia and Djibouti. END SUMMARY.

SOMALIA: THE TFG, AMISOM AND KISMAYO OFFENSIVE

¶5. (C) Meles summarized the current situation in Somalia by stating that &things are going as well there as can be expected.8 Meles said he believes the TFG will &hang on8 as long as the Ugandan contingent of the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) is present in Mogadishu. While stating that the September 17 suicide bombings in Mogadishu that targeted AMISOM,s base at the airport &did not diminish the will of the Ugandans or Burundians,8 Meles commented that the Ugandans and Burundians are poorly trained

and were not prepared for the September 17 suicide bombings.

¶6. (C) When prompted for his views concerning how the TFG can move forward, Meles said it is important that President Sheikh Sharif and the TFG work more closely with the Suffi religious group Ahlu Sunna Wal Jamma; broaden its support base to include other clans, especially Hawiye sub-clans; seek additional Arab support, particularly from Saudi Arabia; and improve the recruitment and training of its security forces.

¶7. (C) Regarding the ongoing effort by the Kenyan Government (GOK) to assist certain sub-clans in southern Somalia in liberating the port city of Kismayo from al-Shabaab, Meles admitted that he discussed the issue briefly with GOK officials and does not think the GOK-led effort will be successful. He justified his conclusion by noting that it will be extremely difficult to unify the Darod/Marehan clan, as the GOK is attempting to do, and that the GOK and former TFG president Abdullahi Youssef previously attempted the same effort and failed. Meles expressed concern that the GOK may be supporting groups in its effort that are opposed to the Government of Ethiopia⁸ and that may also be opposed to the TFG.

DOMESTIC AGENDA

¶8. (C) Ambassador Rice stressed to Meles the importance of Ethiopia holding free, fair and transparent national elections, and of giving the opposition political space. She also highlighted the need for Ethiopia to open its economy, and A/S Carson urged Meles to focus specifically on the

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banking, finance, insurance and agriculture sectors. While stating that he does not necessarily agree with all⁸ of the priorities raised by Ambassador Rice and A/S Carson, Meles noted the need for continued dialogue between our two countries as he values Ethiopia's relationship with the Obama Administration.⁸ Particularly, Meles expressed an interest in broadening our bilateral relationship beyond the military and security fields⁸.

ERITREA: BORDER DISPUTE AND NEW SANCTIONS REGIME

¶9. (C) Noting that there is a presumption, rightly or wrongly, that Ethiopia has not lived up to its international obligations in resolving its border dispute with Eritrea, Ambassador Rice encouraged Meles to take a fresh look at how to resolve the issue. Meles underscored his view that the border dispute is unlikely to be resolved as long as Eritrean President Issais is in power, as he is opposed to any Ethiopian leadership on the issue⁸ and is not likely to take further initiative himself.

¶10. (C) Ambassador Rice asked Meles, views on a potential UNSC resolution creating a stand-alone Eritrea sanctions regime, separate from the existing Somalia sanctions regime (UNSCR 1844) under which Eritreans can be designated for threatening the peace and stability in Somalia, and violating Djibouti's border, among other sanctionable actions. Meles strongly backs this approach.

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